

Women, Infants and Children Get Automated Kansas System

A new automated system in Kansas has completed a statewide rollout of 86 permanent clinics, 26 mobile clinics, and state offices. KWIC, short for Kansas Women, Infants and Children, finished their statewide implementation May 3.

WIC is the common name for the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children. This is a national USDA program administered by KDHE in Kansas. Services include nutrition education, breastfeeding support, and foods that will improve the nutrition of program participants. These services are delivered by more than 450 staff in contracting health departments across the state to more than 60,000 individuals.

KWIC provides comprehensive automated tools that support almost every element of the program short of actually weighing a baby. This has been a major transition for staff to move from a paper data collection form that was completed after the participant contact to an automated process that provides guidance during the interactive contact and collects all information needed for regulatory reporting, management reporting, benefit tracking, and benefit issuance. Program participants like KWIC because it takes less time and provides immediate feedback.

Even the food benefit delivery mechanism has changed. Boxes of preprinted vouchers used to take days each month to unpack, organize, and issue. Many had to be voided and replacements produced because the person's nutritional needs had changed. All of this activity had to be carefully tracked and documented. KWIC produces a personalized food benefit check immediately at the end of a discussion of the person's nutritional needs. The grocer benefits as well since the new check can be handled like any regular bank check with payment received at the time of deposit. The old system took weeks and sometimes months for billing, review, error resolution, and payment to be made.

People build systems and KWIC required the efforts of more than 40 KDHE and clinic staff with the help of three contractors. Starling Consulting, Inc. originally developed the system for Washington and Puerto Rico. Extensive modifications were made to fit Kansas' needs and facilitate the planning and work needed to move to KWIC. Burger, Carroll and Associates provided guidance in early planning and assisted in the procurement process for a system to transfer and a contractor to deliver it. Quality assurance services were also performed on Starling deliverables and they produced the acceptance test plan and test scripts. Covansys, Inc. is a familiar participant in the process in that they ran the old WIC system and now provides the banking services for the new check based benefit delivery system.

KWIC is statewide and that is reason to celebrate for the 60,000 program participants, hundreds of grocers, clinic and state staffs.